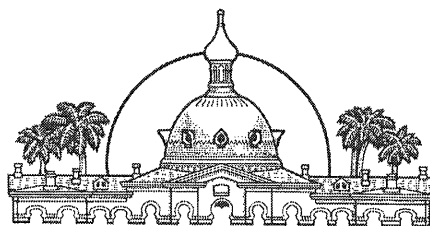


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Testimony of Larry Gispert

Director of Emergency Management

For

Hillsborough County Florida

Before the

Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight

Committee on Homeland Security

U.S. House of Representatives

Unclogging Pipeline Security: Are the Lines of Responsibility Clear?

Chairman Carney, Ranking Member Bilirakis and members of the subcommittee, we appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

I am Larry Gispert, the Director of Emergency Management for Hillsborough County Florida where we are meeting today. I am testifying today on behalf of the citizens of Hillsborough County. I have 30 years experience in Emergency Management with 17 as the Hillsborough County Director. I am a past President of the International Association of Emergency Management (IAEM) and have also served as President of the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association.

Statement of Larry Gispert, Hillsborough County Emergency Management, 2711 East Hanna Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33610. Phone 813 276 2364. Representing Hillsborough County.

There are more than three hundred miles of transmission pipelines in Hillsborough County carrying jet fuel, diesel, natural gas and ammonia. There are many more miles of residential natural gas distribution lines in our county. I have been asked to address how we plan and respond to pipeline incidents, our interaction with Federal authorities, our relationship with pipeline operators, challenges we face and concerns we have.

Since July of 2007 there has been close to 100 incidents involving pipelines reported in Hillsborough County and a number of full Hazmat responses. In many cases there were evacuations, road closures and disruptions; fortunately there was only one serious injury and no fatalities in these incidents. It is important to note that more than ninety percent of these incidents were from Natural Gas distribution lines and almost all of these were construction related accidents. In the near thirty year history of the ammonia pipeline there have been two major releases, one in May of 2003 and again in November of 2007. Both of these releases were the result of intentional individual actions.

In the past two and a half years we have worked closely with Federal authorities to improve our abilities to respond to pipeline incidents and work towards preventing them all together. We meet regularly with the United States Coast Guard and have contact with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Transportation Security Administration (TSA). We have met with Commandant Allen of the Coast Guard and talked with the past Administrator of the Department of Transportation Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). In August of 2008 we assisted PHMSA in hosting a Roundtable on Emergency Response to Anhydrous Ammonia Transportation Incidents. There were approximately 130 people in attendance at the Roundtable in Tampa. Those participating included representatives from local, state and federal government, area first responders, and ammonia users from across the country, ammonia transporters (pipeline, rail and truck) and academics. As a result of the success of this Roundtable it was decided to hold a similar workshop for Chlorine gas. The Chlorine Workshop took place in March, 2009. An indirect result of the Roundtable was the agreement worked out with CSX Railroad and their customers to limit or stop the movement of railcars containing Toxic Inhalation Substances during Super Bowl week 2009.

Since the November 2007 Riverview incident we have been in regular contact with area pipeline operators (Kinder Morgan – Central Florida Pipeline Co, Gulf Stream Natural Gas System, Florida Gas Transmission Co, and Peoples Gas) in particular Tampa Bay Pipeline Corporation. We worked with the company and have produced new maps of the pipeline which have been distributed to area planners and first responders. Exposed portions of the Ammonia pipeline now have jacketing to help prevent a reoccurrence.

We understand that the responsibility for the security of our pipelines lies first with the operators and then with the locals. The Federal government has a department who is responsible for the safety of pipelines... basically everything except security. There is a separate agency responsible for pipeline security. This division has eleven personnel (including two managers and four branch chiefs) and is responsible for all U.S. pipelines. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between PHMSA and TSA notwithstanding, the separation of pipeline safety from pipeline security are a distinction without a difference to anyone except in Washington. To the best of my knowledge my department has had no contact with anyone from the

TSA Pipeline Security Division since the Ammonia Workshop. This is of concern to us and we would welcome the opportunity to share information.

There seems to be a major disconnect between the goals and objectives of TSA and PHMSA and this is of major concern to us and area operators. This has lead to confusion in the past and until reconciled will likely lead to further confusion. Mainly you have one agency who's goal is to make the location of buried pipelines as visible as possible so no one accidently digs them up and another agency that would like to make them invisible so no one can intentionally blow them up. The question is do we continue to juggle safety and security until some sort of balance is reached or do we look for an alternate solution? In this day and age there ought to be a better system in place, one that assures both safety and security.

We in Hillsborough County and the Tampa Bay region will remain vigilant. We will train, plan and exercise so that we can continue to respond quickly, appropriately and safely when things go wrong. We will share any lessons learned and strive to remain a great example of cooperative effort. As I like to say we are always ready to help you in your disaster.

Again I would like to thank the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify and for their interest. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at the appropriate time.